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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5874  
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1373  
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0231  
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 4506  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 3801  
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 7327  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 4879  
RUEHVI/AMEMBASSY VIENNA 0072  
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL CALCUTTA 1082  
RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU 1097  
RUDKIA/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 0926  
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHDC  
RUEHPH/CDC ATLANTA GA  
RUEHRC/USDA FAS WASHDC  
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 000287

SIPDIS

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STATE FOR EAP/MLS, G/AIAG;  
PACOM FOR FPA;  
USDA FOR FAS/PECAD, FAS/CNMP, FAS/AAD, APHIS;  
BANGKOK FOR USAID:JMACARTHUR, APHIS:NCARDENAS,  
REO:JWALLER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/15/2016

TAGS: [EAGR](#) [EAID](#) [AMED](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [CASC](#) [TBIO](#) [KFLU](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: BURMA'S AI OUTBREAK IN POULTRY SPREADS FURTHER

REF: A. RANGOON 284

[1](#)B. RANGOON 274

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Classified By: Econoff TLManowe for Reasons 1.4 (b, d)

[1](#)1. (U) Summary: Burma's AI outbreak in poultry, which began on March 10-11, continues to spread. On March 18, the GOB responded to new outbreaks of AI in poultry at eight farms in another Rangoon township located near a major poultry producing area. Officials continue to respond by culling all poultry on affected farms and disinfecting the premises. The GOB has reported no suspected human cases. Officials increased efforts to address vulnerabilities at markets where live poultry is sold. End summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) GOB Rapid Response Teams responded to reports of 1,605 poultry deaths over two days at eight poultry farms in a "livestock zone" in Nyaung Hnit Pin Township, north of the most recent outbreak sites in Rangoon. Lab technicians detected the AI virus, and PCR confirmation is expected by March 20. On March 18 - 19, the Livestock Breeding and Veterinary Department (LBVD) Director General supervised the culling of 22,337 chickens by the LBVD culling team, the destruction of eggs and feed stores by the Rangoon Division AI Prevention and Control Committee, and disinfectant spraying by LBVD teams at the eight farms.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Officials have begun to monitor the health of poultry and humans within the controlled zone surrounding the affected farms. The Livestock Zone maintains some biosecurity measures, and authorities suspect that the virus may have entered the zone through egg trays or feedbags. Access to wild birds is limited, and no wild bird deaths were

reported in the area. The area of the new outbreaks contains many government- and military-owned farms, and borders on Hmaw Bi, one of the country's major poultry producing areas.

¶4. (C) Jum Coninx, WHO AI Coordinator, told us on March 17 that a confidential source informed her of "thousands" of unreported poultry deaths on military-owned farms in Mingladon and North Okkalapa Townships in Rangoon. The Burmese military owns numerous agricultural and commercial enterprises around the country. Her source said that LBVD officials culled the remaining poultry and disinfected the farms, using the same procedures on government premises as on commercial and residential farms. In their internal reports prepared for the Minister of Livestock, which they share with the Embassy, LBVD confirmed that one of last week's outbreaks occurred at a police station in North Okkalapa Township and that they had also sprayed disinfectant at army grounds in the same township. The internal report did not mention any other poultry deaths at military farms.

¶5. (SBU) On March 14, FAS specialist observed that most commercial poultry farms in Hlaing Thaya, site of two recent outbreaks, had closed down. She reported that many Rangoon farmers quickly sold their chickens in local markets before they could become infected, taking a 25%-50% loss from usual profits. Responding to earlier concerns voiced by FAO, WHO and USAID, LBVD conducted educational talks on biosecurity at markets in Mingaldon and Hlaing Thaya Townships. Embstaff report that new procedures are in place at some wet markets, including the requirement that poultry sellers wear masks, and that the government will allow only sellers who are certified "H5N1 - Clean" to sell poultry at markets.

¶6. (C) While some blamed political pressure from high officials or uncertain lab procedures for the delay in

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acknowledging the AI outbreak in Rangoon in the media this month, sources have told us that the pressure to suppress the news came from CP, the major commercial poultry producer. CP, a Thai-owned company, was hit hard by the 2006 outbreak, when the GOB culled all poultry within a one kilometer radius of affected farms. CP reportedly cannot withstand another big downturn this year, and urged the government to release information in the press slowly to reduce the impact on their sales. LBVD reps told us that a similar broader culling procedure might be necessary to contain the current outbreak before it spreads to large private and government poultry producers in Hmaw Bi and further north in Bago Division, two areas that, together with Mandalay, host most of Burma's commercial poultry enterprises.

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